

Unlicensed Drivers Involved In Fatal crashes

This fact sheet focuses on unlicensed drivers and motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in South Australia 2004 to 2008.

Unlicensed drivers and riders can represent a high risk element within the driving community as they may have never undergone a practical driving assessment or they may be driving while disqualified due to a breach of licence condition or having committed a road traffic offence.

For the purposes of this fact sheet, “unlicensed” refers to situations where:

- The driver/rider has never held a licence
- The licence has expired and the driver/rider has failed to renew
- The driver/rider is unlicensed for the particular vehicle they were driving at the time of a crash (eg. Car licence while driving a heavy vehicle, or riding a motorcycle without the appropriate licence endorsement)
- Learner driver unaccompanied by a Qualified Supervising Driver*
- The driver/rider has been disqualified from driving.

*(*To act as a Qualified Supervising Driver for a learner’s permit holder, the accompanying driver must have held a full driver’s licence continuously for the previous two years)*

Driving Unlicensed

It is difficult to estimate the number of drivers or riders who drive while unlicensed. Table 1 shows the numbers of drivers and riders who have received an expiation notice for driving with an expired or inappropriate licence as well as those apprehended for driving while unlicensed or disqualified.

Table 1: Drivers and riders expiated/apprehended for driving unlicensed, South Australia, 2004-2008

Year	Expired/Inappropriate Licence	Unlicensed/Disqualified	Total
2004	6575	13034	19609
2005	7402	12730	20132
2006	7733	12142	19875
2007	7787	11351	19138
2008	7351	9858	17209
5 year average	7370	11823	19193

The total five year average in Table 1 of 19193 people caught driving unlicensed represents approximately 1.7% of all South Australian licence holders. This, of course, does not include cases where unlicensed driving is not detected by police.

Table 2 shows that, between 2004 and 2008, 82 fatal crashes involved unlicensed drivers, an average of 16 per year. This equates to 15% of all fatal crashes over the same period. Of the 82 fatal crashes, the unlicensed driver or rider was responsible in 85% of cases.

The number of crashes has remained steady over the five year period as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers, South Australia, 2004-2008

Year	Number of crashes
2004	17
2005	16
2006	14
2007	18
2008	17
Total	82

Of the 82 unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes in Table 2:

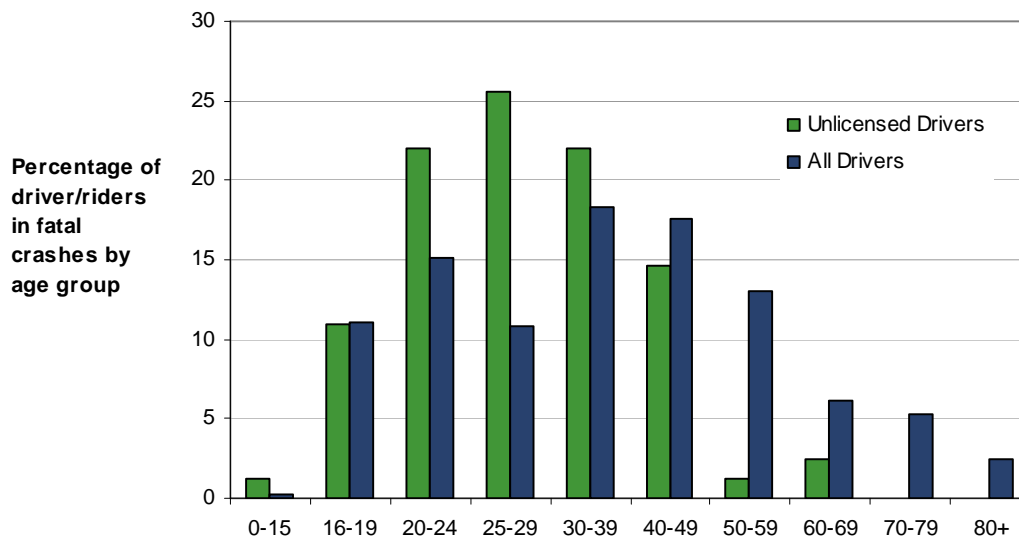
- 17% were disqualified from driving at the time of the crash
- 38% had never held a licence
- 12% were unlicensed for the vehicle which they were operating at the time of the crash
- A third had allowed their licence to expire – for periods that ranged from 25 years to a few days
- 2 of the drivers (2.5%) had both expired licences and were driving vehicles for which they had never held a licence.

The 82 fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers resulted in 93 fatalities and 47 serious injuries. The majority of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers were hit fixed object (43%), roll over (13%) and right angle crashes (11%), which is comparable to fatal crashes generally in South Australia.

Age and Gender

As can be seen in Figure 1, over a quarter of all unlicensed drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes over 2004-2008 were in the 25-29 year age group. This compares to 11% of 25-29 year old drivers involved in fatal crashes generally. Notable figures are also seen in the 20-24 and 30-39 age groups. The older population, above age 50, do not feature highly as unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Figure 1: Unlicensed drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes by age group, South Australia, 2004 -2008



As in fatal crashes generally, men are over represented - 89% of the 82 unlicensed drivers were male.

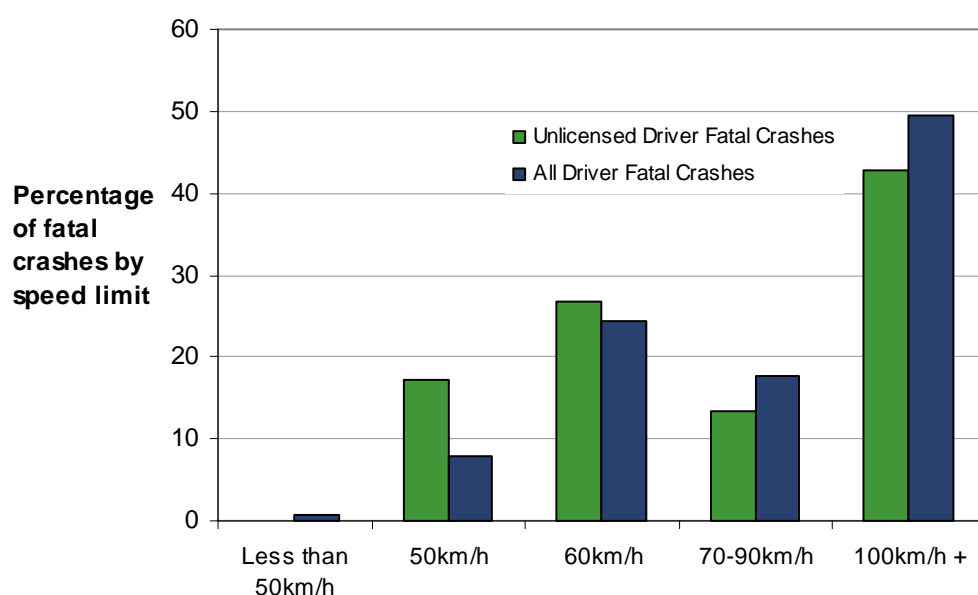
Country or Metropolitan

More fatal crashes typically occur in rural areas. Over 2004-2008, 56% of all fatal crashes occurred in rural areas. This compares to 50% of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers occurring in rural areas.

A higher proportion of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers also occur on roads with a speed limit of 60km/h and under, compared to all fatal crashes.

However, Figure 2 also shows that 68% of fatal crashes generally occur on roads with a speed limit of 70km/h and above, compared to 56% of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers.

Figure 2: Percentage of fatal crashes by road speed limit, South Australia, 2004-2008



Other Risk Factors

Driving while unlicensed is already often a risk taking activity. When combined with other risk factors such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and failure to wear a seatbelt or helmet, the chances of a crash occurring or a crash ending in a fatality increase.

Seatbelts & Helmets

Table 3 shows the frequency with which drivers and riders wear seatbelts or helmets. An increase in failure to wear these safety items is seen in unlicensed drivers and riders that were involved in fatal crashes.

Table 3: Drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes where seatbelt/helmet not worn, South Australia, 2004-2008

	Seatbelt not worn	Helmet not worn
Unlicensed Drivers/Riders	36%	15%
All Drivers/Riders	21%	9%

Alcohol & Drugs

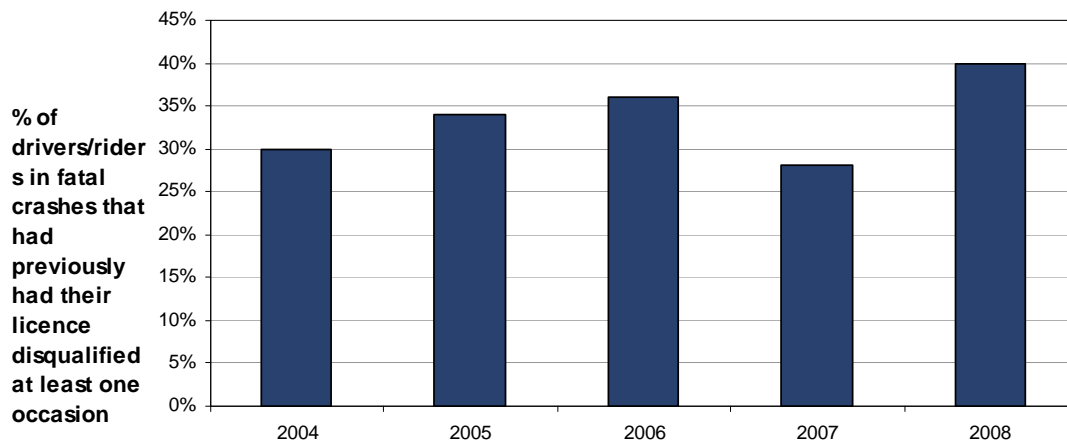
Of the unlicensed drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes that were tested, 46% were found to be over the legal limit of 0.05. Of those who tested positive, 58% were three or more times over the legal limit.

Of the unlicensed drivers who died as a result of the crash, 41% were found to have MDMA, methamphetamine, THC (Cannabis) or a combination of these in their system. This compares to an average of 21% of drivers and rider fatalities generally.

Previous Disqualifications and Offences

A high proportion of drivers and riders responsible for fatal crashes have previously been disqualified on at least one occasion. The table below shows that on average over the past five years, a third of drivers responsible for fatal crashes, have had their licence disqualified at least once.

Figure 3: Unlicensed drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes who have previous licence disqualifications, South Australia, 2004-2008



The unlicensed drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes over 2004-2008 had an average of 5 offences, primarily consisting of speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and disobey road rules. Of those that had been disqualified in the past, the average number of disqualifications was 4.7. The highest number of disqualifications one individual had was 17.

Definitions of police reported casualty types:

Casualty Crash - A crash where at least one fatality, serious injury or minor injury occurs.

Casualty – A fatality, serious injury or minor injury.

Fatal Crash - A crash for which there is at least one fatality.

Fatality - A person who dies within 30 days of a crash as a result of injuries sustained in that crash.

Serious Injury Crash - A non-fatal crash in which at least one person is seriously injured.

Serious Injury - A person who sustains injuries and is admitted to hospital as a result of a road crash and who does not die as a result of those injuries within 30 days of the crash.

Minor Injury Crash - A crash for at least one person sustains injury but no person is admitted to hospital or dies within 30 days of the crash.

Minor Injury – A person who sustains injuries requiring medical treatment, either by a doctor or in a hospital, as a result of a road crash and who does not die as a result of those injuries with 30 days of the crash.

Property Damage Only Crash – A crash resulting in property damage in excess of the prescribed amount in which no person is injured or dies within 30 days of the crash.

Data sources

The data presented in this reports was obtained from the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure Road Crash Database. The information was compiled from police reported road casualty crashes only

Figures relating to the current year are preliminary and are subject to revision.

Enquiries

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